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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000218

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MIXED SUNNI/SHIA BAGHDAD SUBURB TROUBLED BY JAM
AND INSURGENT WOES

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Charles O. Blaha, reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary. Leading Mada'in resident Kamel al-Samaraii (Sunni Arab) told EmbOffs January 10 that anti-Sunni police aggression was causing large numbers of Mada'in youth to join the insurgency. He alleged that the patrolling MoI forces are infiltrated by Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militia members who conducted killing and torture operations against Sunnis. Sa'ad Salman (Shia Arab) argued January 11 that the problem rested not with the MoI, but with the insurgents and terrorists who had managed to cripple residents' way of life. He said that residents are fed up with the violence and lack of services, and were increasingly turning to Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militia to protect them. He pleaded for help, arguing that security for Mada'in suburb was too linked to Baghdad city to ignore. END SUMMARY

MADA'IN: FEW OF ITS KIND

¶12. (U) Mada'in Qada (or county), a mixed Sunni/Shia area located in the governorate of Baghdad, was once a tourist destination noted for its Persian ruins. It sits at an important crossroads for those wishing to travel to several Shia holy sites in the South, as well as for those wishing to access roads leading to the North. Its local, non-governmental Shura council, comprised of both Shia and Sunni community notables, is one of the few of its kind in the area.

SUNNIS ALLEGED POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN KILLINGS

¶13. (C) Local Shura Council member Kamel al-Samaraii (Sunni Arab) told EmbOffs January 10 that Ministry of Interior (MOI) are engaging in abusive practices in Mada'in. He alleged that MOI forces were arresting primarily Sunni residents, many of whom would later be found dead. Others, he said, were being taken to MoI's National Police detention center in Khadamiya to be tortured into signing confessions. Al-Samaraii claimed that these police forces were either infiltrated by or working in concert with Jaysh al-Mahdi militia, though he was unable to provide details.

¶14. (C) Al-Samaraii acknowledged that the insurgency was destabilizing Mada'in, causing Iraqi Security Forces to take aggressive action. He cautioned, however, that local elders were having a hard time preventing their increasingly alienated youth from joining the insurgency because of extreme tactics. He believed that the solution rested with the designation of a new and more tempered local MoI commander, who would treat their residents better. He explained that tribal leaders and Mada'in Shura

Council members had attempted to resolve this issue in September when they sent a delegation to speak with the Prime Minister. The abuse reportedly diminished for two months, only to restart.

SHIA LOCAL LEADER SAYS PROBLEM IS INSURGENCY

¶ 15. (C) Fellow resident and regional council member Saad Salman (Shia Arab) denied receiving any reports from his constituents that MoI was employing abusive tactics, arguing instead that the insurgents were the true problem. Salman said that Mada'in was truly in a "tragic" situation. Because the insurgency targeted infrastructure, the area lacked electricity, water, and access to schools. Residents are fed up, he said, by both the violence and the lack of services. He reported that groups such as Jaysh al Islami, al Qaida (led by Abu Omar al Baghdadi in Mada'in), 1920s brigades and others made their homes in Mada'in, often in abandoned properties previously belonging to former Saddam-era military officers. Salman indicated that residents were increasingly relying on freestanding Jaysh al-Mahdi militia to protect certain Shia enclaves of Mada'in from the excesses of the insurgency.

COMMENT

¶ 16. (C) Mada'in has long suffered sectarian tension; in fact it was one of the first areas where we received reports of internal mass displacement (of Sunnis) in the aftermath of the Al Askariya Shrine attack. Though Mada'in is technically a mixed Qada, both al-Samaraii and Salman agree that it has fully segregated into Sunni/Shia pockets. Despite this segregation, the sectarian violence has not

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diminished and does not appear close to doing so. Both leaders admitted being fed up with sectarianism, but like so many other Baghdad residents we have talked to, were clearly in the grip of their own biases. Despite these biases, it is important to note that we have received other complaints against MoI and the former mayor, Fadhl Biriel, of Mada'in from a local human rights NGO based in Baghdad that would strengthen al Samaraii claims. The former mayor was arrested by MNF-I forces this past fall.

KHALILZAD